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THE

HISTORY

OF

DAHOMY,

AN INLAND KINGDOM OF AFRICA;

COMPILED FROM

AUTHENTIC MEMOIRS;

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES.

BY ARCHIBALD DALZEL,

FORMERLY GOVERNOR AT WHYDAH, AND NOW AT CAPE-COAST-CASTLE.

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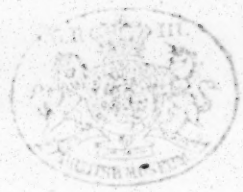

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

CHARLES LORD HAWKESBURY,

PRESIDENT

OF

THE LORDS OF THE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL,

OF TRADE AND PLANTATIONS, *&c. &c. &c.*

MY LORD,

I DO myſelf the honour, in conſequence of Your Lordſhip's permiſſion, to dedicate this *Hiſtory of Dahomy* to Your Lordſhip, as the only proof which, at this diſtance, I can give of my gratitude for your uncommon attentions; and as a ſincere teſtimony of the many advantages which I daily ſee reſult to the Britiſh Commerce and Shipping, from Your Lordſhip's Commercial Legiſlation.

 Permit

Permit me only to add, that I ſhall in every ſituation endeavour to prove myſelf worthy of being conſidered as,

My Lord,

Your Lordſhip's

Moſt faithful,

And moſt devoted Servant,

Archibald Dalzel.

Cape-Coaſt-Caſtle, Africa,
26 *June*, 1793.

PREFACE.

THE contemplation of man, in the various ſituations and under the different circumſtances in which he from time to time preſents himſelf to our view, is one of the nobleſt employments of the philoſophic mind, as it immediately leads to that ſelf-knowledge which deſervedly holds the pre-eminence over all others, and which cannot be obtained without it.

To arrive at a juſt knowledge of human nature, a progreſs through the hiſtory of the ruder nations is eſſentially neceſſary. It is from the actions of mankind, when ſeen under little other controul than that of their own will, that the tendency and effects of the paſſions appear more clearly and truly, than when under the influence and reſtraint of the laws of refinement: nor is there any other way to judge of the value of cultivation, in the eſtimate of human happineſs, than by this kind of compariſon.

But the hiſtory of ſavage nations is very difficult to be obtained. Themſelves have no records; nor, without other incitement, will travellers more cultivated remain long enough among them, to become acquainted with their language, cuſtoms, manners, and opinions, to form a true picture of a people. Scraps haſtily

haſtily picked up and ill underſtood, put into form by a fertile imagination, conſtitute moſt of thoſe works that are offered under ſuch name: whence ariſe the many ſtrange notions and prejudices that we are apt to entertain of thoſe people, and to refute which nothing is wanted, but a reſidence for a due time amongſt them. It therefore becomes neceſſary to ſay ſomething concerning the following Work, in order to ſhew the ground of credibility it ſtands on, and to give the reader a ſufficient confidence in the truth and candour with which the facts are repreſented. For this purpoſe, the names of the Authors alone would be ſufficient to thoſe acquainted with them: to others it will be neceſſary to mention, that the late Mr. *Robert Norris*, of Liverpool, whoſe death, ſince the writing of this book, is juſtly regretted by all who knew him, was eighteen years in the African trade, was well acquainted with the language and cuſtoms of the people, and was indefatigable in obtaining, from both blacks and whites, the memoirs from which his part of the work was written. Beſides, his own obſervation furniſhed many curious and intereſting facts, as will be found in his hiſtory of Ahadee, and his journey to Abomey in 1772, which are here a ſecond time printed, with many corrections and emendations, finiſhed during his laſt illneſs.

The life of Adahoonzou II. and the beginning of the reign of Wheenoohew, the preſent king of Dahomy, are collected from the communications of *Lionel Abſon*, Eſq. the preſent Britiſh Governor at Whydah; of whom we need only ſay, that he has been ſeven and twenty years reſident on the coaſt, and upwards of twenty in the preſent government; where, from his ſituation, and a thorough acquaintance with the people and their language,

guage, he has been enabled to obtain every information he could deſire, or they afford; and this the more readily, as his great knowledge is found no leſs uſeful to them, than to his employers.

Mr. *Dalzel* had collected theſe, and written the Introduction, when, his duty calling him to Cape Coaſt, he was obliged to leave the care of the preſs to a friend; a circumſtance the more to be regretted, as his great intelligence in the ſubject, had he been preſent, might have afforded it a higher degree of perfection than it has now to boaſt of: his competence to ſuch a taſk cannot be doubted, after reading the Introduction juſt mentioned, the reſult of near thirty years obſervation, ſeven of which he was reſident in Guinea, and four of theſe Governor at Whydah, in which government he was ſucceeded by Mr. Abſon.

Before leaving England, in 1792, he conceived that the addition of the preceding reigns would render the work more complete, and ſo, more worthy the liberal encouragement of his numerous friends. This part therefore is ſupplied, from all the authors that could be found who had treated of the ſubject; but principally from Snelgrave, whoſe ſtyle carries with it the irreſiſtible evidences of truth, which are ſimplicity and candour. How it is executed, is ſubmitted to the judgment of the reader. If it does not diſgrace the reſt of the Work, the writer is ſatisfied; and whilſt he declares that he has uſed his utmoſt pains to prevent cenſure, he does not offer himſelf as a candidate for praiſe, nor wiſhes to lay claim to any part of the book but its errors.

This

This Work, conſidered as a collection from ſeveral writers, will doubtleſs require much indulgence for the inequality of the ſtyle, for a few repetitions that might otherwiſe have been avoided, and for ſome errors of the preſs, which great care has not been able to obviate. But Candour is the boſom-friend of Judgment; and the Editor, pleading a deſire to pleaſe, need not fear pardon where he has failed, when aſſiſted by ſuch an advocate. Even the title might have appeared more ſuitable to the Work, had it been Memoirs, rather than Hiſtory: to which laſt it can claim no other right, but that of containing every thing hiſtorical that its collectors could find relating to Dahomy. The Notes generally ſhow the authorities from which they are taken; thoſe marked with R. N. were given by Mr. Norris; thoſe with A. D. by Mr. Dalzel; and the few with J. F. were thoſe added after his departure: when they are without theſe marks, they belong to the writer of the text referring to them.

The curious fruit mentioned in the Introduction, and to which I have given the name of *oxyglycus*, I find was known to Des Marchais, who deſcribes it* as a little red fruit, which, being chewed, gives a ſweet taſte to the moſt ſour or bitter things. But he miſtakes, where he ſays that the ſeed is much like pear-kernels; for ſome of the natives of Cape Coaſt, with whom I have lately converſed, affirm, with Mr. Dalzel, that it is a ſtone-fruit; that it is called *aſſabah* on that part of the coaſt; and that it grows on a tall ſhrub, not on a tree, the fruit hanging down in cluſters, like the cherries of the laurel. This muſt be diſtinguiſhed from the

* Tom. II. p. 203; & vide Prevoſt, Tom. IV. p. 350.

the *kola*, or *boeſi*, mentioned by ſeveral authors, as giving a reliſh to water or palm wine; which grows on lofty trees, as this was ſaid to do; but which, to Boſman, ſeemed to be a ſpecies of the *areka*, or *beetle**.

Similar to our account of the ceremony uſed in dooming the King of Eyeo to death†, and of its conſequences, is that related by Diodorus Siculus, in his deſcription of the Ethiopians. It is not, ſays this hiſtorian, the cuſtom of the kings of Ethiopia, to put their ſubjects, though condemned, to death. They ſend to the criminal, by the proper meſſenger, a *token* of his doom; which he reſpectfully receives, and, retiring to his own houſe, kills himſelf. To which we may add, that there were ſome caſes where this mode was practiſed in other countries; but that which moſt applies to our inſtance, is what follows. In like manner, continues he, did the prieſts at Meroë act towards the king himſelf; for when they wiſhed to be rid of him, they had only to acquaint him, that the oracle of the Gods, whoſe will, they told him, no mortal ought to diſpute, had decreed, that he ſhould put himſelf to death: a ſummons which never met with reſiſtance till the time of the ſecond Ptolemy; when *Ergamenes*, one of their kings, whoſe mind had been improved by the learning and philoſophy of the Greeks, on receiving ſuch an imperious and dreadful meſſage, inſtead of compliance, led his army to the city of Arata, the reſidence of the prieſts, and the ſeat of their golden temple, where he deſtroyed the whole knot of them and their adherents, and for ever aboliſhed the cuſtom.

* Boſman, p. 287.

† Vide Hiſt. p. 12, 156.

This meſſage was no doubt accompanied with the ſame formalities as in other inſtances; and ſome token ſent to the king, to confirm the ſentence, as well as to give it authenticity; which token, though it might not be the ſame with that uſed at Eyeo, ſtill produces a coincidence in a very extraordinary cuſtom, that for countries ſo diſtant, and times ſo remote, muſt appear very remarkable. Nay, ſo many inſtances of this kind are found, between the cuſtoms and ceremonies of different and diſtant parts of Africa, that we are often led to conclude there muſt, at an early period, have been an intercourſe between them. Time has eraſed the æra from the page of hiſtory; but the veſtiges of ſuch an intercourſe may ſtill be perceived in facts of this ſtriking nature.

Moreover, when we conſider that the beſt hiſtorians affirm the Nigritians to have been the firſt inhabitants of Africa, and that the tawny people were interlopers; we may as reaſonably ſuppoſe thoſe cuſtoms to have originated amongſt the inhabitants, as amongſt their invaders, and to have travelled *towards* the North, rather than from it. There is no more reaſon to ſuppoſe Nigritia to have been always in its preſent ſtate of ignorance and barbarity, than Ethiopia, Egypt, and Greece; only that the period of its grandeur is farther removed. The fall of refinement into barbariſm, we well know, is much more rapid than its riſe; and this, becauſe when refinement is carried beyond a certain pitch, it evaporates the metal as well as the droſs; enervates the body, ſo as to unfit it for the hardy reſiſtance of violence; and renders the mind ſo light, that it becomes the plaything of every plauſible wind that may be directed againſt it.

On

On the other hand, we have no more reaſon to ſuppoſe the Phœnicians or Ethiopians to have been always the ſame cultivated people that they were in the times of Solomon, Alexander, and Ptolemy, than to ſuppoſe the ſame of Britain from its preſent ſtate; when we know, that ſcarce 2000 years are elapſed, ſince the chief ornament of our politeſt ladies, was the length of their hair, and the blue tattooing of their bodies.

I would not here be underſtood as intimating, that all the ſimilar cuſtoms of Guinea, and the northern or eaſtern nations of Africa, took their riſe in the ſouth; becauſe many of them ſhew the contrary, having an immediate relation to Mahommedaniſm, and ſuch as have evidently been introduced ſince the Hegira; partly by the incurſions of the Arabs, and other nations, partly by commercial intercourſe: it is only to thoſe of ſuch a nature as this juſt mentioned, that we would apply our hypotheſis.

The map is that of Mr. Norris, with a few additions; which, for the places on the coaſt, and the poſition of Abomey, is near enough to the truth; but in the internal parts is far from being diſcriminate: the ſituations, much more the boundaries, of many of the kingdoms mentioned in our hiſtory, being very imperfectly known to the Europeans, or even to the Dahomans themſelves, as I have had occaſion to obſerve in ſeveral of the Notes. Even the diſtance between the ſame two places is differently ſtated by thoſe who have travelled over it. For inſtance, from Whydah beach to Abomey, which is perhaps the moſt beaten track, by Europeans, of any in Africa, the di-

ſtance is reckoned, by Mr. Lambe to be 200 miles; whilſt Mr. Norris makes it 112, and Mr. Dalzel only 96. Nor is this all; the very names of the ſame place are as diſcordant as the poſitions or diſtances. *Whydah*, as it is pronounced by the natives, who ſound the *w* of it ſtrong, like that in *whip*, the French write Juida; the Dutch, Fida, &c. Eyeo is written many different ways, as may be ſeen in the Notes; but not in that which I preſume is the right one, viz. Gago. Snelgrave miſtakes Mahee for Eyeo, which he calls Yahoo; very near to the Arabian ſound of Gago. *Gago*, ſo called by Leo, is written *Kuku*, by the tranſlators of the Nubian Geographer, and *Gugoo* by the African diſcoverers. Affiante, ſounded Aſhantee, is by ſome called Inta; which country I conjecture to be our Tappah: and many other ſynonyma are to be found, much more diſſimilar in their appearance than theſe. So that under ſuch conſiderations it proves oftentimes very difficult to aſcertain, either from books or travellers, the identity of many towns and countries: as I have experienced, in common with others who have undertaken that labour; and of which more hereafter. This being the caſe, we muſt be indebted to circumſtances, and ſometimes to conjecture, for the probable, when we cannot obtain the actual, ſituation of places: and from theſe helps we have been led to conclude the identity of Dauma and Dahomy; of Gago and Eyeo; of In-Ta and Ta-pah; and to give a poſition of theſe from Abomey, and from each other, different in the Notes from thoſe found in the body of the Work; as I did not think proper to alter that without greater certainty. There is one error, however, that ſhould be corrected; I mean the latitude of Abomey, which, in the ſecond page of the Introduction, is ſaid to lie in 9 degrees 50 minutes north, agreeable

to

to its place in former maps; but which ſhould have been 7 degrees 59 minutes north, in conformity to our own.

I ſhall now account for the reaſons that induced me to adopt theſe different names, as ſynonyma, that this liberty may not appear the mere effect of imagination, and in hopes that I may thereby ſave ſome trouble to future enquirers: the difficulty attending on almoſt every inveſtigation relative to the interior African geography being ſuch, that to travel through Nigritia on paper, is almoſt as dreary and devious as through the country itſelf.

The identity of Dauma and Dahomy, is clearly proved from their ſituation, which on all the maps is the ſame, viz. on the eaſtern ſide of, and adjacent to, the river Volta; though it is not eaſy to trace by what means the ancient geographers obtained the knowledge of its poſition ſo truly. It muſt be obſerved, that the name of Dauma does not occur in any author, nor in any map that I have ſeen, till after the appearance of Leo's Deſcription of Africa; for in 1561 it is not to be found in the maps of Ruſcelli; though even the Latin tranſlation of Leo, which muſt have been ſubſequent to the author's edition, had then been publiſhed ſix years: yet it is in the Planiſphere of P. Plancius, dated 1594, and in the Atlas of G. Mercator, who died in that year: ſo that it was probably introduced by *Sanutus*, who is ſtyled the exacteſt divider of Africa, and whoſe Geography was publiſhed at Venice in 1588. If ſo, for I have not the book, this author ſeems to have had further information than that afforded by Leo; for he has not only placed the kingdom of Dauma in the very ſituation it is now found to occupy, but even the capital of the ſame name in about nine degrees

degrees north, in which he has been followed by moſt of the ſubſequent geographers, and which anſwers near enough to the latitude of Abomey: whereas Leo* only makes a general mention of this, with ſeveral other kingdoms, which he ſays are on the ſouth of Nigritia.

There is a circumſtance that, though perhaps it may only be the engraver's error, is too remarkable to be paſſed over; which is, that the town Dauma is in Plancius's map† ſpelt *Dauina*. If this be intentional, the near coincidence of this ſound with Dawhee, the former capital, is ſtill more extraordinary.

In the maps belonging to Sir Jonas Moore's Mathematics, publiſhed in 1681, which were reviſed and prepared for the preſs by Dr. Halley, and ſaid to be taken from the *neweſt* geographers extant, we ſtill find both the kingdom and town of Dauma preſerving their former poſition; and it is not till after the publication of the Doctor's own map, in 1700, that they are ſupplanted by Ardra and other places; which, as they were found by himſelf or other navigators to lie along the coaſts, were too haſtily ſuppoſed to run far inland: but the conqueſt of Ardra and Whydah, by the Dahomans, in 1727, once more brought to light this ancient and warlike people; and replaced their kingdom in its former ſituation, with the ſlight alteration of the name from Dauma to Dahomy, as it was given by Captain Snelgrave.

In

* Leo, Book I. Chap. i.

† This map is in one ſheet, and is probably a contraction of his larger one, publiſhed in 1592, which I have not.

In many maps there is another kingdom of Dauma, conſiderably to the eaſtward of this, of which no account has hitherto, I believe, been given. Sanutus himſelf places the ſecond Dauma with the other kingdoms of Gothan and Medra, between Gaogo, Borno, and a country as little known as either of thoſe it bounds, called *Judæorum terra*. But the inconſtant poſition of this latter Dauma in the maps, and the determinate one of ours, renders ſuch ambiguity worth no more than the mere mention.

As to the name of Fouin, or Foy, which the natives ſay was formerly that of Dahomy, it might be another appellation of the ſame country, like that of England for Britain, &c. with the conſideration of which I ſhall neither tire myſelf nor the reader.

The poſition of Dahomy, or Dauma, once determined, it will not be difficult, I think, to inveſtigate that of Eyeo. The Dahomans ſay, it is to the N. E. of Aſſem, or Great Ardra; but whether to the N. E. or N. W. thus much is certain, that it is to the northward, and that it muſt be a nation immediately adjoining to Dahomy; ſince there is no mention throughout our Hiſtory of any intermediate one, which muſt have been the caſe, had it exiſted, from its interference in ſome of the many tranſactions that have paſſed between the two kingdoms. It is the common opinion, that the mutual boundary of Eyeo and Dahomy, is part of that chain of mountains which forms a line of ſeparation between a great part of Nigritia and Guinea. Now the only country adjoining to Dahomy on the north, and bearing any affinity to Haiho, or Eyeo, is Gago; which preſerved its vicinity to the river Volta, and conſequently to Dahomy, till within

* Vide Magini Geographiæ Pars ſecunda, Ed. 1617, p. 187.

within a few years; when new names induced geographers, perhaps too haſtily, to diſturb the former poſition of places. From Plancius to the time of Senex, Gago is the N. W. boundary of Dahomy. In D'Anville, Gago is changed to Gogo, and removed further to the northward; as it is, under the name of Gugoo, in the late map of Major Rennel, added to the diſcoveries of the African Aſſociation. Before theſe authors, I believe, there is no intermediate country found between Gago and Dahomy; nor perhaps would there yet, if our late information had been more accurate.

As to the difference in form between the two words, it may have ariſen from the different manners of repreſenting Arabic words in Roman characters, or of different nations repreſenting the ſame ſound. In the former caſe, it is very eaſy to make ſuch a miſtake, as theſe three ſounds, viz. G, ſoft*, Hh, and Ch, are repreſented in Arabic by the ſame character, with the help only of a ſingle point;† and that the latter is often the fact, I have already ſhewn in ſeveral inſtances.

But Snelgrave ſays, from the information of the Portugueſe Mulatto found at the court of Trudo, that Eyeo is "many "days journey off, beyond a great and famous lake, which is "the fountain of ſeveral large rivers, that empty themſelves "into the Bay of Guinea." Let us conſider this deſcription. Aſſem, or Ardra, where our Author then was, is diſtant from Gago,

* This is nearly the Engliſh ſound of E aſpirated, or He. Moore ſays, the kingdom called Ghana, by the Nubian Geographer, is ſounded Yany by the natives. Travels, p. 15; et v. Appendix, p. 6, 66.

† Walton. Introduc. ad Lection. Linguar. Orientalium.

Gago, in Senex's map,* twelve or fourteen days journey, at about twenty miles per day: but then it is conſiderably to the ſouth-weſt of the lake alluded to, if by ſuch lake be meant that called by ſome writers Guarda, or Sigeſmes: which lake alſo has had ſeveral names and places, till at laſt it has vaniſhed; for the ſmall lake found near Ghanah, in Major Rennel's map, differs too much in ſituation to be conſidered as its remains: it might rather be taken for thoſe of Ptolemy's lake Lybia.

The middle of the lake Sigeſmes, according to Senex, lies in about 13 degrees north and 5 degrees eaſt of London; conſequently, it is ſomething to the eaſtward of Ardra; but it does not ſeem to hold a place in the ancient maps. Ptolemy has no one that correſponds to this ſituation; though ſome have placed it near his lake Lybia, and others, to that which he calls Nigrites: to this laſt, one part of Snelgrave's deſcription beſt anſwers, as they generally make it the ſource of many rivers.

Ptolemy places the lake Nigrites at the north-weſt extremity of the river Niger, cloſe to the Mandrian mountains; on the other ſide of which is the head of the Maſſa; which river nearly anſwers in poſition to that of the river Senegal.

Who firſt diſcovered this lake, or who gave it the name of Sigeſmes, or Guarda, I know not. It is neither in Edriſi nor

* I ſhall here uſe Senex's map of Africa, engraved in 1740 for Poſtlethwaite's Dictionary, as a very good one for the time, and better adapted for our purpoſe than thoſe of more modern date, from its correſpondence with former writers: in which point of view the old map of H. Moll will alſo be found very uſeful.

Leo; yet it was known before Sanutus, as I find it in Ruſcelli's modern maps, annexed to his edition of Ptolemy's Geography, which was printed at Venice in 1561. He alſo lays down the Niger lake, which he deſcribes as the ſource of two rivers: that running to the northward he calls Rio de l'Oro, which opens into the Atlantic Ocean in about the latitude of 19 degrees North; the other, with a ſouth-weſt courſe, joins the ſame ocean in about 8 degrees North.

Barbot, who wrote in the latter end of the laſt century, gives the fulleſt account of this lake, that I have met with in any author. He ſays, the ableſt geographers of this age, after much conteſting about it, agree, that the Niger runs in a body from the lake Sigeſmes, or of Guarda, which extends about 100 leagues from eaſt to weſt, and about 50 from north to ſouth; and lies in about twelve and a half degrees of North latitude from London, and between the 4th and 9th degrees of Eaſt longitude. This lake, purſues he, ſome ſay, waters Mandingo, Guber, and Gago, on the ſouth; and Agadez and Cano on the north; and from it runs to the weſtward the continuation of the Niger, that is then called the Içа, or Sanaga, and which, at Cantorſi, or Cantozi, divides into ſeven branches. Theſe he enumerates: two, he ſays, are the rivers Senegal and Gambia; the others are, Rio St. Joao, Rio St. Domingo, Rio Grande, and its two branches, the Guinala and Biguba. Though, he obſerves, that this diviſion is diſputed by others, who hold, that none of theſe proceed from the Niger*; which ſeems to be the preſent opinion.

* Barbot's Deſcription of the Coaſts of North and South Guinea,—Churchill's Voyages, Vol. V.

Be that as it may, this poſition and general deſcription is near enough to that aſſigned by Snelgrave; for by calculation I find the middle of the Sigiſmes lake bears from Ardra about N.N.E. diſtance 374 miles; which, at twenty miles per day, is nineteen or twenty days journey, and ſo far agrees with the Dahoman account.

As to the flowing of the rivers ariſing from this lake into the Gulph of Guinea, it is perhaps a mixed idea. In Ruſcelli, the Volta, and ſeveral other rivers that run to the ſouth, ſeem to have their ſources near this lake; and perhaps a ſight of his map, or of the information from whence it was drawn, may have led to ſuch expreſſion. Certain it is, the old geographers have deſcribed the Niger to abound in lakes; though this ſeems to be a doubt with the moderns. Perhaps both may be right. The overflowing of the Niger may in time have produced ſtrange changes in the country; eſpecially as its courſe has had no interruption from human induſtry: and we might inſtance the environs of the Caſpian Sea, and ſeveral places within the limits of our own enquiry, where great changes have been made in the face of the country from rapid waters frequently overflowing their banks. Major Rennel has explained this in a very ingenious way, in a paper on the Ganges and Burrampooter rivers, publiſhed in the 71ſt volume of the Philoſophical Tranſactions. And Mr. Beaufoy, in his account of the African Diſcoveries, mentions a river near Teſſouwa, to the eaſtward of Mourzouk, that was overwhelmed by the moving ſands; which the perſon who, in 1789, gave this information, remembered a deep and rapid ſtream.

From all which it appears, that the former, if not the preſent, exiſtence of ſuch a lake is eſtabliſhed; that it is many days journey from Ardra, is the ſource of many great rivers, and that Gago is in its neighbourhood; all which, anſwering to the poſition and deſcription that are aſſigned to Eyeo, by Snelgrave and the Dahomans, prove the identity of theſe two places, as exactly as can be expected from information ſo dark and confuſed as is every part of that relating to the geography of the interior Africa.

The only powerful neighbour to Gago, is Aſſiante, or Inta; which is particularly deſcribed, about the year 1700, by Boſman and Barbot*, as a country then but lately known to the Europeans; abounding in gold, and bordering on Gago, N. E. by N. and as an inſtance of its greatneſs, Boſman tells us, that in two battles with the Dinkirans, its neighbours, there were ſlain on both ſides upwards of an hundred thouſand men; that Dinkira was deſtroyed by them, and lay then in ruins. This induced me to think, that In-Ta and Ta-pah, as well as Aſſiante, might mean the ſame place, as we find of Mahee and Yahou, &c. eſpecially as none other can be found in the neighbourhood of Gago able to ſtand in competition with it.

I have dwelt perhaps too long on ſo barren a ſubject; but was fearful, by the aſſertion of what was merely hypothetical, that I might juſtly incur cenſure, if I did not ſhew the reaſons for my opinion; therefore I have gone into this detail, that the reader might the better judge for himſelf. The inveſtigation has been attended

* Boſman, 56, 57. Barbot, 451.

attended with much more labour than recompence; but I think thoſe who pretend to inform others, ſhould take great care that themſelves are not deceived; not only becauſe by ſuch inattention they propagate error, but becauſe they moſt deceive thoſe who place the greateſt confidence in them.

The principal impediment to the improvement of the geography of Africa, ſeems rather to ariſe from the jealouſy of the inhabitants of the ſea-coaſts, in permitting white men to travel through their country, than from the danger or difficulty attending the penetration: though it muſt be confeſſed that it cannot be entirely ſafe to venture through regions, where the people are often as ſavage as the beaſts of prey. This jealouſy originates in their fears, leſt either the advantages of their trade with Europe ſhould be leſſened, or perhaps transferred, from them to their neighbours; or that the inland kingdoms, already very powerful, by obtaining European arms might rule them at their pleaſure. There are many inſtances in former writers, of their care and cunning, in concealing from travellers the names and nature of the adjacent countries, and even of the remote parts of their own; nor do we find that the ſame propenſity is abated at the preſent hour. As to their apprehenſions relative to the inland countries, our very hiſtory owes its riſe to them: the oppoſition of Ardra and Whydah to the interference of the Dahomans with their trade, cauſed them to hazard and loſe their political exiſtence.

Perhaps a better map of the internal parts here ſpoken of, might have been afforded by Mr. Abſon, had we entertained an idea, that there would have been time enough before the Work had

had been printed off, to have availed ourſelves of the communication; though, from what has been ſaid, this may appear problematical.

Indeed, I am of opinion, that the Northern trading Moors, or *Mallays*, as they are called, will be the only inſtruments whereby the geography of Nigritia, and the ſouthern provinces, will ever be completely obtained; as they come through the interior parts, travel every where, are well received, and conſequently want only an intelligent and attentive mind, to render them every way competent to the undertaking. No doubt but our conſuls and merchants, ſituated along the northern coaſts, may be able to find men of this deſcription, who, for a certain advantage, would be glad to collect all the information neceſſary for our purpoſe.

The Mallays, ſo called, ſeem to anſwer to the deſcription of the Julapes, or Jalabs, mentioned in the Lords Report, and by Mr. Lediard, as travelling merchants, and as the ſources of great information; though perhaps they may be only ſtragglers from the caravans, ſlaves, delinquents, or anomalous beings, who prefer a vagabond life; for they do not ſeem, from any of our accounts, to have a ſettled plan of reviſiting the ſame place, at regular periods, like merchants, though they ſometimes wear a mercantile appearance. Perhaps they are of the ſame kind with thoſe Arabian teachers mentioned by Mr. Penny, in the report juſt now alluded to, concerning the ſlave trade, as coming down from the Mahometan ſtate of Fula, to Sierra Leone, with their tranſcripts of the Alcoran to ſell, probably as charms, and at the ſame time to propagate Mahomedaniſm, as far as their perſonal

ſonal ſafety might allow. Certain it is, they poſſeſs not only the art of writing, but other uſeful arts unknown to the ſavages whom they viſit, and for which they are held, by great and ſmall, in very high eſteem.

What they really are, may eaſily be known by our governors at the different forts in Guinea, if the knowledge be thought worth obtaining: eſpecially if it ſhould attract the attention of that laudable Aſſociation lately inſtituted for the purpoſe of diſcovering the internal parts of Africa; whoſe ſucceſs, we heartily wiſh, may remove the opprobrium with which our ignorance of that country juſtly reproaches this age of enquiry. The caravans purſuing always the ſame route, can do but little towards it; nor is the information of a ſingle traveller, however reputable and diligent, ſufficiently ſecure from error, to be entirely depended upon. Therefore ſuch of our African governors as underſtand Arabic, ſhould be directed to make the neceſſary enquiries of theſe people; and where they have not this language, Moors, acquainted with that and the Engliſh tongue, may be retained, with ſmall expence, at the factories where thoſe Mallays are moſt uſually found, who might interrogate them concerning the countries they have paſſed through, their ſituations, &c. which liberty of converſation, I think, might be obtained from the kings or caboceers, without much difficulty, notwithſtanding what was ſuggeſted to Snelgrave.

Some of theſe people are found as priſoners in different States; and ſome few inſtances have been known, where they have been ſold as ſlaves: one is mentioned by Barbot, and there are two others of which I have received authentic information: but the

firſt

firſt caſe is, when they have been taken in a country at the time of its conqueſt; the ſecond, probably for delinquency; for in general they ſeem to be perfectly at liberty to go and come, when and where they pleaſe.

The ſubject of the *Slave-Trade* has purpoſely been avoided. Not only becauſe it has been a topic of public diſcuſſion, but even of controverſy; which may well render any thing that might have been ſaid about it here unneceſſary. Yet as the zeal for the abolition of this trade is held out, and I hope truly, as proceeding from philanthropy, I could not avoid the opportunity of directing that valuable principle to its proper object, in Chap. V. and VII. of the reign of Trudo; where I hope I ſhall not be blamed for bringing into review things ſomewhat remote from the Dahoman Hiſtory, ſeeing that general propoſitions of this nature require more than a ſingle proof in their demonſtration. And there is a peculiar degree of propriety in inſtancing Mexico, when we ſpeak of the fate of priſoners of war, not only as it was the moſt poliſhed of all the ſavage nations which the Europeans have diſcovered, but alſo the moſt cruel to its captives. Beſides which, it furniſhes inſtances of wars, where the ſole object was that of obtaining victims for ſacrifice, the very thought of which is too ſhocking to endure for a moment. Theſe demonſtrate, beyond the power of contradiction, the propenſity of mankind to war and cruelty; which principles, as human wiſdom can never eradicate, it ſhould employ itſelf, when it has power, in ſo far counteracting, as to make their evil effects the leaſt poſſible: and this will never be done, but by making mercy the *intereſt* of the conqueror. Whatever evils the ſlave-trade may be attended with (and there

is no good without ſome mixture of evil) this we are ſure of, it is mercy to the unfortunate brave; and not leſs to poor wretches, who, for a ſmall degree of guilt, would otherwiſe ſuffer from the butcher's knife; too many inſtances of which have fallen under the conſideration of travellers, and of which more than one occurs in this Hiſtory*. If it were advanced, that the deſire of gain tempts one nation in Africa, or any where elſe, to make depredations on another; we might juſtly anſwer, that ſhould this deſire be obviated, ſome other would excite to the ſame violence. I have already mentioned a war, on a private quarrel between two of theſe countries, wherein there were ſlain, in only two battles, one hundred thouſand perſons; and Boſman relates, that the people of Akim, who came to the aſſiſtance of the Dinkirans in that war, loſt thirty thouſand men†. Nay, look but at the occaſion of all the wars in Europe, the world of refinement, for ſo many centuries back; and then examine the tendency of nations to peace and philanthropy. Compare the cauſe of theſe wars with their effects, and wonder, if you can, at a ſecond ever taking place, after mankind has beheld the folly of the firſt. Nothing leſs than the all-ſeeing eye of a Gallic Philoſopher can unravel ſuch a myſtery; and to him we leave to diſplay, whilſt he is whetting his knife, the natural propenſity of the human mind to harmony and brotherly

 love;

* Boſman tells us, that at Benin, on account of a chain of factitious coral, not worth two-pence, five perſons were put to death. The chain was a royal preſent, which it ſeems it was a capital crime to loſe; ſo that the unfortunate owner ſhared the ſame fate with the thief,—as did three other perſons, for only being privy to the tranſaction. Boſman, p. 406.

† Boſman, p. 67.

love; and the eaſe with which univerſal peace might be eſtabliſhed over all the world—a propoſition ſcarce controvertible throughout all the dominions of *Chimera*.

The delay in the publication of this Volume, though it demands an apology, has neither proceeded from the remiſſneſs of the Editor, nor that of the Printer. Part has ariſen from the avocations of buſineſs; part, from thoſe unavoidable accidents to which every human undertaking is liable; but the greater part, from the time neceſſarily employed on the improvements of the book: and when it is conſidered, how much is now afforded to our generous Subſcribers more than at firſt was promiſed, not only in the addition of the early reigns, but of the copper-plates, and many anecdotes and explanations pertinent to the Work, it is hoped their curioſity will be more than compenſated for the obſtacles to its earlier gratification.

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DIRECTIONS FOR PLACING THE CUTS.

Place the Map oppoſite the Title-Page.

Plate I. The Levée of the King of Dahomy—oppoſite page viii. of the Introduction.

Plate II. The King marching out at the head of his Armed Women—oppoſite page 54 of the Hiſtory.

Plate III. Human and other Victims devoted for Sacrifice, oppoſite p. 130.

Plate IV. The Grand Proceſſion of the King's Daughters, and others of his Women—oppoſite p. 136.

Plate V. The Laſt Day of the Cuſtoms—oppoſite p. 146.

Plate VI. The Heads of One Hundred and Twenty-ſeven Priſoners of War cut off, to complete the Ornament of the King's Wall—oppoſite p. 190.

ERRATA.

Introduction—p. ii. l. 7, for 9 *degrees* 50 *minutes*, read 7 *degrees*, 59 *minutes*.
—p. xxiv. bottom, for *hori*, read *ſome*.

Hiſtory—p. 5, l. 1, place the * at Whydah.
Id. Notes, l. 2, for *was*, read *were*.
p. 7, l. 3, for *where*, read *when*.
p. 12, l. 12, for *of*, read *off*.
p. 16, l. 11, for *preſented*, read *repreſented*.
p. 27, l. 4, for *two thouſand*, read *twenty thouſand*.
p. 42, l. 3, for 400 *hundred*, read 4 *hundred*.
p. 44, l. 1, for *on*, read *long*.
p. 66, l. 13, after *outrages*, dele *as is*.

ory—p. 81, l. 26, for *the Ahadee*, read *Ahadee*.
p. 98, l. 5, dele *King's*.
p. 106, l. 11, read *conduct of the others*.
p. 118, l. 1, for *impaſſable*, read *impoſſible*.
p. 129, l. 19, for *ann*, read *and*.
p. 166, l. 15, read *Badagree*.
p. 169, l. 2, dele *them*.
p. 173, Note—after *idiom* read, *ſignifying his titles*.
p. 178, l. 2, for *and probably*, read *and the body probably*.
p. 229, l. 6, for *prince*, read *people*.

INTRODUCTION.

IN the beginning of the following hiſtory, the etymology of the name of the kingdom of which we are about to treat, is given according to the tradition of the country; which poſſibly may be right, though the tranſaction to which it alludes, may be much earlier than the natives have dated it. For thus much is certain; that the kingdom of *Dauma*, or *Douma*, mentioned by *Leo*, in the latter end of the 15th century, is placed by all the geographers, from that time to the beginning of the preſent century, in the very ſame poſition with the kingdom of Dahomy; that is, on the eaſt ſide of, and nearly adjacent to, the river *Volta*; and extending northwards to the ridge of mountains that ſeparate this kingdom from thoſe of *Guber* and *Gago*.

Whatever may have been the importance of the Dahoman nation, hiſtory affords no marks of it previous to the conqueſt of the maritime kingdoms of *Ardrah* and *Whydah*, between the years 1724 and 1727, as the blacks have no records, but thoſe traditional ones, the legends of their bards; which are ſo politically affected, that they are but little to be depended on: *

* We ſhall find the King frequently forbids tranſactions to be mentioned, that ſeem to reflect ſhame on him or his miniſters, &c. Vide p. 182.

it is from the whites reſident amongſt them, or thoſe who have traded a long time with them, that the true hiſtory of any of the countries on this part of the coaſt can be obtained.

Dahomy, as known at preſent, is ſuppoſed to reach from the ſea coaſt, about 150, or 200 miles inland, though no European has penetrated above half that diſtance; the capital, Abomey, lies in about 9 degrees and 50 minutes of north latitude, and between the 3d and 4th degree of eaſt longitude, reckoned from the meridian of Greenwich.

The face of the country has been thus deſcribed by *Boſman*, *Smith*, and other authors. "The vaſt number and variety of "tall and ſpreading trees, ſeeming as if they had been planted "for decoration; fields of the moſt lively verdure, almoſt wholly "devoted to culture; plains, embelliſhed with a multitude of "towns and villages, placed in full view of the ſurrounding "diſtrict; a gradual and almoſt imperceptible aſcent, to the "diſtance of forty or fifty miles from the ſea, which terminates "the proſpect; formed the moſt pictureſque ſcene imagi-"nable, unobſtructed by hill or mountain." This captivating picture of beauty and fertility, was, no doubt, a juſt one, before the conqueſt of *Whydah*; but ſince that period, the different genius of the conquerors has made a very conſiderable change.

The ſoil is a deep, rich clay, of a reddiſh colour, with a little ſand on the ſurface, except about *Calmina*, where it is more light and gravelly: but there is not to be found a ſtone ſo big as an egg in the whole country, ſo far as it has been viſited by

by the Europeans; ſo that a pair of *canky-ſtones*,* weighing together about twelve or fourteen pounds, brought from the diſtance of one hundred miles or more, are ſold at *Grigwhee* for five ſhillings ſterling.

The country abounds with buffaloes, deer, ſheep, goats, hogs, both wild and domeſtic, poultry, of various kinds, particularly *pintados*, or Guinea hens, and Muſcovy ducks; and the lakes are ſtored with plenty of mullets, carp, and other fiſh. The markets are, therefore, well ſupplied with proviſions, beef excepted, which is ſomewhat ſcarce, though produced in the country. The elephant, though its fleſh be coarſe, is made uſe of as food by the natives; and dogs are reared for the ſame purpoſe.

Of farinacious vegetables, the country yields a plentiful ſupply, proportionable to the quantum of culture; namely, maize, millet, or Guinea-corn, of different ſorts; a kind of peas, or rather kidney-beans, called callavances; and alſo a ſpecies of beans, called ground-beans. The *Dahomans*, likewiſe, cultivate yams, potatoes of two ſorts, the caſſada, or *manioka*,† the plantain, and the banana. Pine-apples, melons,

* Uſed for grinding corn, as we do chocolate; ſometimes making it into meal, and ſometimes adding a ſmall quantity of water during the operation, in order to form a paſte, or dough, for immediate uſe. *Canky* is their name for bread.

* The *manioka*, *caſſada*, or *caſſava*, is a plant well known in the Weſt Indies, for the deleterious quality of its juice, which is fatal to hogs, or other animals, that drink it: yet the root is made into a coarſe meal, and uſed for bread,

oranges, limes, guavas, and other tropical fruits, alſo abound in this fertile country.

Nor is it deſtitute of productions adapted for commerce and manufacture; ſuch as indigo, cotton, the ſugar-cane, tobacco, palm oil, together with a variety of ſpices, particularly, a ſpecies of pepper, very ſimilar in flavour, and indeed ſcarcely diſtinguiſhable from the black pepper in the Eaſt Indies.

A very curious fruit, which is produced in Dahomy, as well as in ſome other parts of Africa, muſt not eſcape our notice; eſpecially as neither it, nor the plant to which it belongs, have hitherto been examined ſcientifically; nor can we claſs it botanically, having ſeen no part of the plant when at its maturity, but the fruit. This reſembles a ſmall olive in every reſpect but the colour; being of a duſky, reddiſh hue, changing at the end next the ſtalk, to a faint yellow. * The pulp is firm, and almoſt inſipid; the ſtone is hard, like that of the olive. After having chewed one or more of ſuch berries, and ſpit out or ſwallowed the pulp at pleaſure, a glaſs of vinegar will taſte, to the perſon trying the experiment, like ſweet wine; a lime will ſeem to have the flavour of a very ripe China orange; and the ſame change

bread, by the Portugueſe, as well as by the negroes, in Brazil, where it is called *farinha de pao*, meal of wood, or ſaw-duſt. It is the cheapeſt and leaſt nutritious of all the ſubſtitutes for bread, in the tropical climates; although it has lately been introduced into this country, and is now ſold by the grocers and apothecaries, at a high price, as a pretended remedy for conſumptions, under the name of *Tapioca*.

* The above deſcription anſwers nearly to our common winter cherry; and perhaps it may not be improperly termed, *Ceraſus oxyglycus*. J. F.

change is produced on other acids, the ordinary effects of which upon the palate is deſtroyed in a very unaccountable manner, without effervesence, or any ſenſible motion. Indeed, the effect is very different from neutralization, ariſing from the mixture of acid and alkali: ſuch combination producing a neutral ſaline liquor; whilſt this miraculous berry ſeems to convert acids to ſweets. Food or drink, not containing any acid, ſuffer no change by the previous uſe of this fruit; its effect upon acids continues, even after a meal, though in a much ſmaller degree. The natives uſe it, to render palatable a kind of gruel, called *guddoe*, which is made of bread, after it becomes too ſtale for any other purpoſe. †

The Dahomans, like the other inhabitants of tropical climates, plant twice a year, viz. at the vernal and autumnal equinoxes; after which, the periodical rains prevail. Indeed they may be ſaid to reap four, or rather two double crops; for ſoon after the *maize* comes above ground, they plant *callavances* in the interſtices betweeen the rows; which practice gives the fields a very beautiful appearance.

The language is that which the Portugueſe call *lingua geral*, or general tongue, and is ſpoken not only in Dahomy-proper, but in Whydah, and the other dependent ſtates; and likewiſe in Mahee, and ſeveral neighbouring places.

With

† The natives deſcribe it as the fruit of a large tree. Plants of ſix or ſeven inches high were raiſed from this fruit, by Mr. *Dalzel*, who tried to carry them from *Angola* to the botanic garden at *St. Vincent's*; but they died on the paſſage. He preſerved the berries in ſpirits, in ſyrup, and in a dry form; but they loſt their ſingular quality in all thoſe preparations. The plant is an evergreen, and the leaves in this infant ſtate are like thoſe of the olive. J. F.

With reſpect to the Dahoman religion, it will hardly be expected that we ſhould be able to ſay much. Like that of many other countries, it conſiſts of a jumble of ſuperſtitious nonſenſe, of which it is impoſſible to convey any ſatisfactory idea to the reader. The Portugueſe word, *feitiço*, or, as the Engliſh pronounce it, *fetiſh*, ſignifying witchcraft, has been adopted by moſt of the maritime natives of Africa, as well as by the Europeans who trade thither. This word at preſent is very comprehenſive in its ſignification, meaning either the ſeveral objects of worſhip, whether ideal or corporal, the act of worſhip itſelf, or the various amulets, charms, and ſuperſtitious mummery of the prieſts, or *fetiſh-men*, who abound in this country. They obſerve no ſabbath, unleſs their market-days, which are conſidered as days of recreation, may be ſo called. Moſt of the ſavage nations have ſome confuſed notion of a Supreme intellectual Being, the maker of the univerſe; but this idea not being eaſily underſtood among a people not much addicted to metaphyſical reaſoning, a variety of corporeal beings have been ſelected as objects of devotion, ſuch as the ſun, moon, living animals, trees, and other ſubſtances. The *tiger* is the *fetiſh* of Dahomy; the *ſnake*, that of Whydah. Among the *amulets*, or *charms*, the principal is, a ſcrap of parchment, containing a ſentence of the *Koran*, which the natives purchaſe from the Moors who viſit this country. This they hang up in their apartments, which are likewiſe decorated with crude, mis-ſhapen images, tinged with blood, beſmeared with palm-oil, ſtuck with feathers, bedaubed with eggs, and other abſurd applications, of which a particular account would be both tedious and unprofitable.

We

We ſhall not, therefore, dwell on the religion, but paſs on to the government and manners of the Dahomans, which deſerve more particularly to be conſidered. The former is the moſt perfect deſpotiſm that exiſts, perhaps, on the face of the earth. The policy of the country admits of no intermediate degree of ſubordination between king and ſlave; at leaſt in the royal preſence, where the prime miniſter is obliged to proſtrate himſelf with as much abject ſubmiſſion as the meaneſt ſubject; all acknowledging the right of the Sovereign to diſpoſe of their perſons and property at pleaſure. Beyond the precincts of the palace, indeed, the miniſters enjoy very eminent privileges. It is true, they are forbid the wearing of ſandals, and other ornaments peculiar to royalty; or to uſe ſuch an umbrella as a white man; * yet their inferiors muſt ſalute them with bent knees, and clapping of hands: they may ſit on high ſtools, ride on horſeback, be carried in hammocks, wear ſilk, maintain a numerous retinue, with large umbrellas of their own kind, flags, drums, trumpets, and other muſical inſtruments. But, on their entrance at the royal gate, all theſe inſignia are laid aſide. The ſilk garment is ſubſtituted by a tunic and a pair of drawers, † made of cotton, manufactured in the country; the neck is adorned with a valuable ſtring of coral; a pair of broad, ſilver bracelets encircle the wriſts; at the ſide hangs a ſilver-hilted ſcymitar, while the hand graſps an ivory club.

* See Life of Adahoonzou II. c. 1.

† The neceſſary proſtrations before Majeſty, unavoidably ſoil this garb. The miniſter muſt, therefore, ſhift at every viſit. Indeed, the Dahomans are at all times very cleanly in their perſons, and particularly ſo, with reſpect to their food, and the utenſils uſed in the kitchen and at table. A very good ſoap is manufactured in the country, of palm oil and pot-aſh.

club. Thus equipped, one of the miniſters of ſtate is always found in waiting at the palace gate; and in this garb only may he enter, which muſt be with the utmoſt caution and reſpect, and not till the monarch's permiſſion be ſignified by one of the women. On his entrance, he crawls towards the apartment of audience, on his hands and knees, till he arrives in the royal preſence, where he lays himſelf flat on his belly, rubbing his head in the duſt, and uttering the moſt humiliating expreſſions. Being deſired to advance, he receives the King's commands, or communicates any particular buſineſs, ſtill continuing in a recumbent poſture; for no perſon is permitted to ſit, even on the floor, in the royal preſence, except the women; and even they muſt kiſs the earth, when they receive or deliver the King's meſſage.

The King's ſons, not excepting the heir apparent, have no rank; being obliged to ſalute the miniſters with clapping of hands, in a kneeling attitude. On ſuch occaſions, however, thoſe officers, out of reſpect to the blood-royal, haſten to take them by the hand, and raiſe them from ſuch an humble poſture.

The King, and all his ſubjects, receive ſtrangers with the moſt remarkable courteſy. Ambaſſadors, from whatever ſtate, are not put to the neceſſity of learning the Dahoman etiquette from the maſter of the ceremonies. Every one ſalutes the Sovereign, according to the faſhion practiſed in his own country. Chairs are placed for European governors, or maſters of ſhips, upon which they ſit, covered, till the King makes his appearance, when they make a bow, ſtanding, and uncovered; after which

Chesham sculp

The King of Dahomy's Levée. introd:

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which, they reſume their ſeats, and put on their hats. Sometimes the Dahoman Monarch has been known to ſhake hands with an European; but this is a very uncommon mark of royal condeſcenſion, and beſtowed only on ſome great favourite.

White viſitors are always honoured with a glaſs of ſome cordial liquor, filled by the King's own hand; which if refuſed, is apt to give offence.* Favours of this kind are received with avidity by his own ſubjects, not ſo much for the ſake of the liquor as the honour conferred on them. On ſuch occaſions the ſubject lies on his back, while the King holds the bottle to his mouth. In this poſture he muſt drink, till the royal hand be withdrawn; which ſometimes does not happen before the whole contents be emptied, eſpecially when he has a mind to ſport with the drinker.

So great is the veneration of the Dahomans for their Sovereign, that their hiſtory produces no inſtance of a depoſition. The doctrine of paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance is univerſal amongſt them, and the moſt oppreſſive mandates of the Monarch are ſubmitted to without a murmur. The apparent abject humiliation of the miniſters, on the days of public audience, contributes powerfully to keep the people in ſubjection. The

* One of the European governors, on his firſt viſit, being preſented with a glaſs of geneva, declined it. Upon being informed that it was the cuſtom of the country, on ſuch an occaſion, to drink whatever had been filled by the King himſelf, he ſtill begged to be excuſed, giving for a reaſon, that he was indiſpoſed. Upon which the miniſter in waiting drank it off; having firſt poured it out of the King's glaſs into a little callabaſh which he carried about him: as no ſubject muſt drink out of a glaſs in preſence of the King.

lower claſs cannot think that homage unreaſonable which is paid by the firſt officers of the ſtate; whoſe only privilege, in the royal preſence, is that of lying proſtrate, neareſt the King's perſon, and being the medium of communication between him and his inferior ſubjects. For none but high officers muſt converſe immediately with the Sovereign, though near enough to be heard; it being beneath the King's dignity to be addreſſed by, or to ſpeak to, the vulgar. But although this humiliation be rigidly kept up by the miniſters of ſtate, in public, they are allowed to converſe more familiarly at private audiences, where all the public buſineſs, whether legiſlative or executive, is managed.

The King of Dahomy maintains a conſiderable ſtanding army, commanded by an * *Agaow*, or general, with ſeveral other ſubordinate military officers, who muſt hold themſelves in readineſs to take the field upon all occaſions, at the command of the Sovereign. The payment of theſe troops chiefly depends on the ſucceſs of the expeditions in which they are engaged. On extraordinary occaſions, all the males able to bear arms, are obliged to repair to the general's ſtandard; every *Caboceer* marching at the head of his own people. Sometimes the King takes the field, at the head of his troops; and, on very great emergencies, at the head of his women. †

Whatever might have been the proweſs of the *Amazons* among the ancients, this is a novelty in modern hiſtory, which ought

* Perhaps, from the Turkiſh word, *Aga*.

† See Life of Trudo, chap. ix. Life of Adahoonzou, ch. v.

ought not to be ſlightly paſſed over. Within the walls of the different royal palaces in Dahomy, are immured not leſs than *three thouſand women*. Several hundreds of theſe are trained to the uſe of arms, under a female general and ſubordinate officers, appointed by the King, in the ſame manner as thoſe under the Agaow. Theſe warriors are regularly exerciſed, and go through their evolutions with as much expertneſs as the male ſoldiers. They have their large umbrellas, their flags, their drums, trumpets, flutes, * and other muſical inſtruments. In ſhort, the ſingularity of this inſtitution never fails to attract the particular attention of the Europeans, when, among other uncommon exhibitions, they are preſented with the unuſual ſpectacle of a *review* of female troops.

The chief part of the public revenue conſiſts of voluntary gifts, paid by the ſubjects at the time of the † *Cuſtoms*, when the ‡ *Caboceers* and traders attend, bringing their contributions, according to their reſpective circumſtances. Beſides theſe, a duty is levied on commerce; and ſomething ariſes from captives taken in war, of whom, all that are carried to market are ſold

* Little can be ſaid in praiſe of any of their muſical inſtruments, except the flute; which, though the moſt ſimple that can be imagined, being open at both extremities, with a little notch at the mouth end, where it is ſcraped thin, to divide the wind, produces very agreeable notes; and we can aſſert as a fact, however incredible it may ſeem to thoſe modern *cognoſcenti*, who deny that the ancients made uſe of harmony, that the King's women underſtand and practiſe the combination of the perfect concords, thirds and fifths; and their little airs are not inelegant.

† An annual ceremony, which will be explained in its proper place.

‡ From the Portugueze word, *cabeceiro*, a head man.

for the King's account; but as he pays a certain ſum to his troops for every priſoner* they bring in, and as the greateſt part of the captives are put to death, a ſmall proportion only being reſerved for ſale, the amount they produce muſt fall far ſhort of the expence of procuring them.

The well-known ſhells called cowries, which come from the *Maldiva* iſlands, are the currency of the country, where one thouſand are reckoned equal to half a crown. Theſe circulate in the country, looſe; but all diſburſements from the King's houſe are made in branches of *ſtrung* cowries, containing two thouſand each, deducting one fortieth part, as a perquiſite to the King's women for piercing and ſtringing them. †

When any public work is to be done, ſuch as the erection or repairs of royal buildings, the King ſummons his Caboceers, and portions out the labour among them, paying their people for their trouble. Thus the work is performed with great diſpatch. Beſides ſuch neceſſary diſburſements, the King pays a conſiderable yearly tribute, in cowries and merchandiſe, to his formidable neighbour the King of *Eyeo:* part of which is defrayed from the contributions levied upon thoſe ſtates which are tributary to Dahomy. The reſidue of the royal treaſure is, upon various occaſions, diſtributed with a liberal hand among the

* The King pays alſo for the heads of the ſlain.

† For a table of their value, &c. *vide* p. 135, and note. The terms there found, are likewiſe uſed in their other arithmetical computations; thus, when they expreſs an army of 10,000 ſoldiers, they ſay, two cabeſs and a half; or two cabeſs and ten galinas.

the Dahoman grandees, and even among the inferior ſubjects, ſo that the receipts and expenditure are nearly equal; and the money which flows to the royal coffers, from the King's ſubjects and vaſſals, thus circulates again among the people.

The King of Dahomy has ſeveral palaces; each occupying a piece of ground, of nearly a mile ſquare. The deſcription of that at Calmina will ſerve for all the reſt.

This palace, or *Simbomy*, which, in the language of the country, means a great houſe, is ſurrounded with a very ſubſtantial clay wall, of a quadrangular form, and about twenty feet high. In the middle of each ſide is a guard-houſe, with two centinels at the gate, and a guard of armed women and eunuchs within. On the thatched roofs of theſe guard-houſes are ranged, on ſmall wooden ſtakes, many *human ſkulls*. Such of the inner apartments as the Europeans have an opportunity of ſeeing, conſiſt of large courts, communicating with each other, generally ſquare or oblong, encompaſſed by clay walls. In each of them is a ſort of piazza, or ſhed, formed of poſts, about ſeven feet high, planted in the ground, at the diſtance of about twelve or fourteen feet from the wall. The intermediate ſpace is covered with a ſlanting thatched roof, ſupported by bamboo rafters, reſting upon the poſts, and reaching to the top of the wall, which in this part is alſo about twenty feet, though only eight or ten feet on the other ſides of the court. The areas of theſe courts are of the common ſoil of the country; but under the ſheds, the ground is elevated a few inches, by a bed of clayey mortar, which forms the floor; and the wall is

in

in ſome parts white-waſhed with a ſpecies of pipe-clay, which the country produces. In the middle of the palace there ſtands a large building, of two ſtories, and about thirty or forty feet high; ſo that the top of it may be ſeen from without. This houſe ſeems to be intended more for ſhow than uſe; for the King never dwells in it. The whole has ſomewhat the reſemblance of an aſſemblage of farm-yards, with long, thatched barns, hovels for cattle and carts, and low mud walls, to ſeparate them from each other. The interior of the palace is not ſo eaſily to be deſcribed. Its receſſes are ſcarce ever entered by any human being of the male gender; and the female apartments are guarded from intruſion, with more than eaſtern jealouſy.

The author* had once an occaſion to paſs the limits of the courts already deſcribed, when King *Ahadee* was ſick, and would ſee him in his bedchamber. This was a detached circular room, of about eighteen feet diameter. It had a thatched conical roof; the walls were of clay, and white-waſhed within. There was a ſmall area before it, formed of a wall about three feet high, the top of which was ſtuck full of *human jaw-bones*; and the path leading to the door was paved with *human ſkulls*. The mattreſs and bed-ſted were of European manufacture, the curtains of check. The furniture of the room conſiſted of a ſmall table, a cheſt, and two or three chairs; and the clay floor was covered with a carpet, which the author had ſold to him ſome months before. The apartments for the women, each of whom has a ſeparate hut, occupy, it is ſuppoſed, the remainder of

* A. Dalzel.

of the ſpace within the palace-walls; except a ſmall part, appropriated to the eunuchs, and to ſome neceſſary ſtorehouſes, for holding the proviſions for the King's numerous family, his *cowries*, iron bars, clothes, arms, ammunition, and ſome articles of European furniture.

The late King was very deſirous of buying any thing of this ſort that he could procure; ſuch as tables, chairs, bureaus, mahogany liquor-caſes, walking-canes, caſes of knives and forks, ſpoons, ſilver cups, and glaſs ware. The author once carried him a two handled ſilver cup and cover, of chaſed-work, weighing *two hundred and twenty-ſix ounces*.

The vulgar among the Dahomans affect to believe that their King does not eat. Indeed he does not eat in public, though he makes no ſcruple to drink. He entertains the Whites who viſit him, with great hoſpitality. They often dine in his preſence; ſometimes in the piazzas, or ſheds, before mentioned, and ſometimes in the open area of one of the courts. On ſuch occaſions, the table and the gueſts are ſcreened from the ſun by large umbrellas, held up by attendants clothed in the country dreſs. The King has cooks who have been inſtructed in Europe, or at leaſt at the different forts; ſo that he is able to treat his viſitors with victuals dreſſed in the manner of their reſpective countries. There is no want of table apparatus: the table-cloth is commonly a piece of new linen, cut off for the purpoſe; the diſhes are of pewter or earthern-ware; and the knives and forks ſilver-handled. The white men, on ſuch occaſions, are

ſeated

ſeated on chairs; the *Caboceers*, and heir apparent, are placed on the ground near the Europeans, who hand them ſome of the victuals: which they eat, as if by ſtealth, without knife or fork.

The dreſs of the men, in *Dahomy*, conſiſts of a pair of ſtriped or white cotton drawers, of the manufactory of the country, over which they wear a large ſquare cloth of the ſame, or of European manufacture. This cloth is about the ſize of a common counterpane, for the middling claſs; but much larger for the Grandees. It is wrapped about the loins, and tied on the left ſide by two of the corners, the others hanging down, and ſometimes trailing on the ground. A piece of ſilk or velvet, of ſixteen or eighteen yards, makes a cloth for a *Caboceer*. * The head is uſually covered with a beaver or felt hat, according to the quality of the wearer. The King, as well as ſome of his miniſters, often wears a gold or ſilver laced hat, and feather. The arms and upper part of the body remain naked, except when the party travels or performs ſome piece of work, when the large cloth is laid aſide, and the body is covered with a ſort of frock or tunic, without ſleeves. The feet are always bare, none but the Sovereign being permitted to wear ſandals. In the hand is uſually carried either a cutlaſs or wooden club. For an officer of ſtate, the club is of ivory, which is a very expenſive ornament, on account of the great waſte in making it; a whole elephant's tooth, and that not a ſmall

* One conſiſting of 25 Engliſh ells, of crimſon velvet, was ſent out lately, as a preſent to one of the Kings on the coaſt.

ſmall one, being deſtroyed in the fabrication of this badge of dignity. Inferior *Caboceers* carry a ſort of blunt ſabre, with a broad blade and a wooden handle, ſerving rather for ornament than as an offenſive weapon.

Warriors wear what is commonly called a graſs cloth, made in the country, of the ſkin of palm-tree leaves, parted into ſmall threads, knotted and wove. This is afterwards tinged with various dirty dies, and wrapped round the loins. They alſo wear a cartouch-box of their own manufacture, a powder-flaſk of callabaſh, with many groteſque ornaments and fetiſhes, which, together with the uncouth devices painted on their faces and bodies, give them a very fiend-like appearance. Every *Dahoman* man alſo carries a *tobacco-pouch*, containing tabacco, a flint, ſteel, and tinder; together with one or two tobacco-pipes, in a neat wooden caſe.

The dreſs of the women, though ſimple, conſiſts of a greater number of articles than that of the men. They uſe ſeveral cloths and handkerchiefs, ſome to wrap round the loins, and others to cover occaſionally the breaſts and upper part of the body. The neck, arms, and ancles, are adorned with beads and cowries; and rings of ſilver, or baſer metal, encircle the fingers. The ears are pierced ſo as to admit the little-finger, and a coral bead of that ſize ſtuck into each, if the party be able to afford it; otherwiſe a portion of red ſealing-wax, or a piece of oyſter-ſhell poliſhed, is applied in the ſame manner. Girls, before the age of puberty, wear nothing but a ſtring of beads

or ſhells round the loins; and young women uſually expoſe the breaſts to view.

The *Dahomans* are leſs addicted to the practice of cutting or *tatowing* the body, than their neighbours; contenting themſelves with a perpendicular inciſion, which leaves a mark between the eye-brows. The Whydahs, of both ſexes, cut their foreheads and cheeks in ſuch manner as to give them the appearance of being very much pitted with the ſmall-pox. The women alſo mark the lower part of the body with various devices.

The inhabitants of the neighbouring ſtates are likewiſe known by the ſcarifications on their bodies; every country making uſe of this cuſtom in their own manner. The *Ardrahs* make an inciſion in each cheek, turning up a part of the fleſh towards the ears, and healing it in that poſition. The *Mahees* are diſtinguiſhed by three long oblique cuts on one cheek, and a croſs on the other. Some bore the ears, others the noſe, thruſting a bead or a cowrie into the aperture.

Circumciſion is univerſally practiſed among the *Dahoman* ſubjects, but not at ſuch an early age as among the Jews; the time of ſubmitting to this operation being left to the boys themſelves, whoſe careſſes are not admitted of by the females till they have undergone this amputation. A certain operation, peculiar to this country, is likewiſe performed upon the women.*

The

* Prolongatio, videlicet, artificialis labiorum pudendi, capellæ mamillis ſimillima.

The *Dahoman* woman do not admit the embraces of their huſbands during pregnancy, nor at the time of ſuckling, which continues two or three years, nor while under the *catamenia*; during which they retire to a part of the town allotted for their reception. The proſtitutes, who in this country are licenſed by royal authority, are alſo obliged to confine themſelves to a particular diſtrict, and are ſubject to an annual tax.

The general character of the Dahomans is marked by a mixture of ferocity and politeneſs. The former appears in the treatment of their enemies, and in the celebration of thoſe *Cuſtoms* which have been ſanctioned by the immemorial practice of paſt ages, under the idea of performing a grateful oblation to the deceaſed; the latter they poſſeſs far above all the African nations with whom we have hitherto had any intercourſe: this being the country where ſtrangers are leaſt expoſed to inſults, and where it is eaſy to reſide in ſecurity and tranquillity.

Of their bravery we ſhall have occaſion to produce many conſpicuous examples; and of their hoſpitality and generoſity, every ſtranger who has reſorted to the Dahoman coaſt can teſtify.

The nature of their government makes them very reſerved with regard to every ſtate tranſaction; but on occaſions where this reſtraint is unneceſſary, they are abundantly affable and communicative.

Having already mentioned the *annual cuſtoms*, and as we ſhall have occaſion frequently to take notice of them in the courſe of

this Hiſtory, we ſhall premiſe a ſhort account of this ſingular feſtival.

At the approach of the *Cuſtoms*, which are uſually celebrated ſoon after Chriſtmas, the King leaves *Calmina*, where he generally reſides during the reſt of the year, and repairs to *Abomey*, his ancient capital, and the burial-place of the Royal Family. About this time, he diſpatches his meſſengers extraordinary, called *half-heads*,* with his gold-headed cane and compliments to the European Governors at *Grigwee*, inviting them to witneſs the ſolemnization of this feſtival.

Each of the Governors carries an annual preſent to the King, conſiſting of a piece of rich ſilk for a dreſs, together with ſome brandy and other articles, amounting in the whole to about 50l. ſterling. Theſe are received, not as the conſideration by which they hold their reſpective forts, but as a token of friendſhip and good correſpondence; for the King takes care to make them ſenſible, that he does not accept ſuch preſents for the ſake of their value, as he always returns more than is equivalent: ſuch as a young female ſlave, which he preſents to each under the denomination of a waſherwoman; and one fine cotton cloth, at leaſt, for a counterpane. Beſides this, he entertains them during their ſtay at Dahomy with the greateſt liberality and kindneſs; giving them from time to time, ſheep,

* So called from having the half of their heads ſhaved. They have each ſeveral ſtrings of human teeth, ſlung like a ſoldier's belt, which give them an odd appearance.

ſheep, poultry, and other articles, and allowing an abundance of *pitto* * and meal for their attendants.

The *Yavougah*, or Viceroy of *Whydah*, is charged to furniſh the white men with a ſufficient number of porters and hammock men, together with an armed guard; which laſt is ſeldom accepted of, not from motives of economy, theſe men getting no pay from the Europeans, except about the value of twopence halfpenny each in cowries, for their daily ſubſiſtence; but becauſe the journey is always made in perfect ſafety, and travellers accommodated with Eaſtern hoſpitality. For there are a kind of caravanſeras, in the towns through which they paſs, allotted for their reception; on their arrival at any of which, they are received by the *Caboceer* of the place, who preſents them with ſuch refreſhments and neceſſaries as the country affords, and kindly preſſes them to make known their wants, which he readily ſupplies.

On their arrival at *Abomey* they are received with a ſalute of cannon, and lodged, during their ſtay, in apartments belonging to the maſter of the ceremonies. They are liberally ſupplied, as I have already obſerved, with mutton, poultry, and other articles for their own tables, and thoſe of their attendants; which are ſent from time to time by the King or his *caboceers*.

The celebration of the *Cuſtoms* uſually continues about a month, during which there is ſome public exhibition every fourth

* A kind of ſmall beer, made of maize or millet, which is not an unpleaſant drink.